The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) collects information from first-year and senior students about the characteristics and quality of their undergraduate experience. Since the inception of the survey, more than 1,500 bachelor’s-granting colleges and universities in the United States and Canada have used it to measure the extent to which students engage in effective educational practices that are empirically linked with learning, personal development, and other desired outcomes such as persistence, satisfaction, and graduation.

NSSE data are used by faculty, administrators, researchers, and others for institutional improvement, public reporting, and related purposes. Launched in 2000 with the support of a generous grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts, NSSE has been fully sustained through institutional participation fees since 2002. After two years of pilot testing and extensive analysis, 2013 marked the first year of NSSE’s updated survey instrument and new customization options. This document provides an overview of NSSE 2015, the third administration of the updated NSSE.

Survey Data and Methodology

Nearly 1.4 million first-year and senior students from 585 institutions (564 in the US and 21 in Canada) were invited to participate in NSSE 2015. Of this population, 315,815 students responded to the survey. Less than half (43%) of these were first-year students and 57% were seniors.

NSSE’s sampling methodology calls for either a census of all first-year and senior students or a random selection of an equal number of students from each group, with the sample size based on total undergraduate enrollment. Census administration is available only via the email recruitment method, in which students receive a survey invitation and up to four reminders by email. For NSSE 2015, all but four participating institutions opted for this method. Sampled students at the four remaining institutions received up to three messages by postal mail and up to two reminders by email.

Unless noted otherwise, the results presented below are from 561 institutions—541 in the US and 20 in Canada—that participated in NSSE 2015. Due to nonstandard population files or survey administrations, 24 institutions are not represented. In these summary tables, as in each Institutional Report 2015, only data for census-administered surveys and randomly sampled students are included.

Institutional Response Rates

The average response rate for U.S. NSSE 2015 institutions was 29%. The highest institutional response rate among U.S. institutions was 89%, and three out of five institutions achieved a response rate of 25% or higher. Higher average response rates were observed for smaller institutions, and for institutions that offered incentives (Table 2).

Note: A searchable list of participating institutions by year is on the NSSE website at nsse.indiana.edu/html/participants.cfm.
Survey Customization

Participating institutions may append up to two additional question sets in the form of Topical Modules (NSSE-created) or consortium questions (for institutions sharing a common interest and participating as a NSSE consortium) (Table 3). Of the nine modules available in 2015, the most widely selected module was Academic Advising, followed by First-Year Experiences and Senior Transitions (Table 4). Another customization option—including a question about sexual orientation in the demographic section of the core survey—was elected by 30% of participating institutions.

### Table 3
**Summary of Participation in Additional Question Sets in NSSE 2015**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selection of Additional Question Sets</th>
<th>Number of Institutions</th>
<th>Percentage of Institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One module only</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two modules</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consortium items only</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consortium items plus one module</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: These data include both U.S. and Canadian institutions and 24 institutions with nonstandard population files or administrations. Percentages do not sum to 100 due to rounding.
U.S. Respondent Profile

Table 5 displays selected demographic and enrollment characteristics of NSSE 2015 U.S. respondents alongside all U.S. bachelor’s-degree-seeking students, for comparison. Among NSSE respondents, female, White, and full-time students were overrepresented in varying proportions. NSSE reports use weights as appropriate to correct for disproportionate survey response related to institution-reported sex and enrollment status at each institution. Table 6 provides additional details about U.S. respondents.

Canadian Respondent Profile

Canadian respondents profiled here include 10,816 students (53% first-year, 47% fourth-year) from 20 institutions in 8 provinces, including 8 institutions in Ontario; 4 in Alberta; 2 each in British Columbia and New Brunswick; and 1 each in Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Quebec, and Saskatchewan. Female students and full-time students accounted for about 64% and 92% of Canadian respondents, respectively. The average response rate for Canadian NSSE 2015 institutions was 44%, with the highest institutional response rate being 86%. Nine out of ten Canadian institutions achieved a response rate of 25% or higher.

About 13% of Canadian respondents were at least 24 years old. The majority of students providing ethnocultural information identified as White (74%), while 9% identified as Chinese; 7% South Asian; 4% Black; and at least 2% each Arab, Latin American, and North American Indian. Less than 2% of respondents identified with other categories.
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NSSE National Survey of Student Engagement

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